

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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1.0 Policy

It is the policy of Superior-Greenstone District School Board (SGDSB) to promote equity and inclusive education.

2.0 Definitions

Discrimination means any form of unequal treatment based on a Human Rights Code ground, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices or procedures that appear neutral, but disadvantage certain groups of people. Types of discrimination include systemic discrimination and poisoned environment.

Diversity - the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Equity - a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Harassment (Human Rights Code-Based) means engaging in a course of a vexatious comment or conduct that is known to be, or ought reasonably to be known to be, unwelcome based on age, disability, family status, marital status, creed, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, citizenship and record of offences. It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning or unwelcome, based on a ground of discrimination identified by this policy. Harassment can occur based on any of the Code-based grounds.

Indigenous peoples refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

2SLGBTQIA+ refers to Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual persons.

3.0 Areas of Focus

3.1 Policies, Guidelines and Procedures

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

3.1.1 Articulate the Board's commitment to equity and inclusive education in Board policies,

guidelines, operations and practices;

- 3.1.2 Review Board and revise policies, guidelines, and practices to ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education;
- 3.1.3 Implement equity and inclusive education practices;
- 3.1.4 Embed equity and inclusive education principles in Board and school improvement plans;
- 3.1.5 Establish mechanisms for measuring progress towards equity and inclusive education and adjust courses of action accordingly;
- 3.1.6 Support schools in implementing Board equity and inclusive education policies, programs, and action plans that reflect the needs of their diverse school communities; and
- 3.1.7 Implement positive employment practices that support equitable hiring, promotion and retention.

3.2 Partnerships – Board, School and Community

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

- 3.2.1 Identify Aboriginal and diverse communities across the school board. Request that Aboriginal and diverse community groups identify their representatives for the purpose of establishing school-community partnerships;
- 3.2.2 Review existing community partnerships to ensure that they support the principles of equity and inclusive education and to reflect the diversity of the broader community, including those who identify as Indigenous people, people of colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ and persons with disabilities;
- 3.2.3 Identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents, and the community, so that diverse groups and the broader community have better Board-level representation and greater access to Board initiatives; and
- 3.2.4 Continue to develop and review the effectiveness of partnerships between schools and employers to keep all members of the community working together towards improved educational outcomes and successful participation in society for all students

3.3 Leadership

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

- 3.3.1 Support administration and trustees in promoting the principles of the Board's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, through the Board's mission, vision and values;
- 3.3.2 Provide opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives;
- 3.3.3 Ensure that SGDSB policy directions and priorities, as well as the programs and services, are consistent with the aims of equity and inclusive education;
- 3.3.4 Support and encourage student leaders in their role in promoting the principles of equity and inclusive education; and

- 3.3.5 promote the development of collaborative environments in which students, staff, administrators, federations, unions, and members of the community share a commitment to equity and inclusive education practices.

3.4 Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

- 3.4.1 Review student assessment, evaluation and reporting practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated;
- 3.4.2 Ensure that the diverse identities of students are affirmed in learning experiences in the school;
- 3.4.3 Ensure the diversity of students and the community is reflected in the curriculum;
- 3.4.4 Provide students with opportunities to critically examine issues of equity and inclusion;
- 3.4.5 Support schools in reviewing classroom strategies, and revising them as needed, to ensure that they are aligned with and reflect equity and inclusive education policies;
- 3.4.6 ***Parents/guardians shall be fully informed regarding assessment instruments, evaluation and placement procedures and be involved in IPRC discussions;***
- 3.4.7 Affirm and value each student's first language as an integral part of personal and cultural identity;
- 3.4.8 Offer language development programs to support literacy development and student achievement such as Native as a Second Language (NSL), English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Development (ELD), and other languages possible;
- 3.4.9 Academic and career counseling shall be free of bias or stereotyping related to ethno-cultural background, race, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs and values system linguistic experience and socio-economic status and/or other bias; and
- 3.4.10 The Board recognizes the importance of providing guidance and counseling services to support the needs of diverse students in order to foster preserve and ensure the growth of all students in self-awareness, peer relationships and career exploration.

3.5 Creed (Religion) Accommodation Guideline

(See Appendix A)

3.6 School and Workplace Climate and the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

- 3.6.1 Promote a climate of understanding and mutual respect. The Board endeavours to foster a climate that is free from issues such as bullying, racism (e.g., anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, anti-people of colour), homophobic harassment, transphobic harassment, sexual harassment, workplace harassment or discrimination according to the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- 3.6.2 Provide staff with supervisory authority at the Board, with the knowledge and skills to

identify harassment, discrimination and workplace harassment and to respond to it in a timely manner;

3.6.3 Ensure that the process for addressing bullying/harassment, discrimination and workplace harassment is monitored for efficacy;

3.6.4 Monitor school climate using school climate surveys that include questions on equity and inclusive education, to identify inappropriate behaviours, issues, or barriers that need to be addressed; and

3.6.5 Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.

3.7 Professional Learning and Development

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

3.7.1 Provide opportunities for school and system leaders, students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education professional learning and leadership initiatives;

3.7.2 Support the school's review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices;

3.7.3 Provide employees with the skills to identify and deal with bias in materials, including classroom and other resources; and

3.7.4 Draw upon existing expertise within its own organization, other boards, and community agencies and groups, to assist with the provision of staff development programs and professional learning activities.

3.8 Accountability and Transparency

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will:

3.8.1 Post the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and guidelines on the Board's website and provide information about it and practices to students, parents/guardians, administrators, teachers, school staff, school councils, and volunteers;

3.8.2 Develop board improvement plans and support schools in the development of school improvement plans that are aligned with this Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and the SGDSB values; and

3.8.3 Establish a process to monitor progress with equity and inclusive education and assess effectiveness of the Policy.

4.0 Review

This management guidelines shall be reviewed in accordance with SGDSB Policy.

Creed (Religion) Accommodation Guideline

1. Legislative Context

Superior-Greenstone District School Board (SGDSB) recognizes the pluralistic nature of Canada, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of religion. Superior- Greenstone District School Board upholds the Ontario Human Rights Code (Code) that protects an individual's right to be free from discrimination because of creed. The Board acknowledges an individual's right to follow or not to follow creed (religion). The Board values equity, inclusion and respect for all.

Creed is not defined in the Code. It includes religious beliefs and practices as well as Indigenous spiritual practices. The duty to accommodate creed is about providing the most appropriate accommodation in the circumstances. It is also about engaging in a meaningful and respectful good faith process to assess needs and find appropriate solutions. The duty to accommodate is about determining an appropriate solution and providing it, short of undue hardship.

Although ~~faith~~ creed observances are based on generally accepted practices as defined by a religion/faith group, the Board recognizes that members of faith groups are not homogeneous in their understanding, interpretation and practice of their faith. It is not the role of schools to monitor students' compliance with a particular observance.

Human rights protection for creed does not extend to practices and observances that are hateful or incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups or contravene criminal law.

2. Requests for Accommodation Based on Faith (Creed)

Superior-Greenstone District School Board will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to students or staff who believe that the Board's operations or requirements interfere with their ability to exercise their faith or creed beliefs and practices to the point of undue hardship. A determination of undue hardship will be based on an assessment of costs of the accommodation, outside sources of funding, and health and safety risks to the individual and others at SGDSB.

It is expected that students and their families, as well as staff, will help the Board to understand their faith/creed related needs and will work with the Board and its schools to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

Students or staff may request an accommodation to observe their creed beliefs commonly, in one or more of the following areas:

- school opening and closing exercises;
- prayer;
- dietary requirements;

- fasting;
- attire;
- modesty requirements in Physical Education;
- participation in daily activities, curriculum and program;
- observance of faith-based (creed) days of significance; and/or
- leave of absence for faith-based (creed) days of significance and celebrations

3. Suggested Responses to Requests for Accommodation

School Opening and Closing Exercises

A student or employee who objects to all or part of opening or closing exercises for religious/faith-based reasons will be exempted and given the option not to participate and to remain in the class or in an agreed-upon location.

Prayer

Schools should make every reasonable effort to accommodate the requirements for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location within the building for prayer when requested by students or staff. Some accommodation for late school arrival and/or early school leaving may be necessary. Prayer times change in some faiths according to the seasons.

Observing Religion (Creed) Days of Significance:

It is recommended that schools recognize religious days of significance, pertinent to their school community. Recognition may include but is not limited to announcements, displays, bulletin boards, posters, student work, assemblies, or other events. Schools will endeavour to be aware of the faith-based observances of their school community when planning activities.

Schools should be aware of dietary restrictions of various religions/faith groups. This awareness includes breakfast and lunch programs, snacks, overnight outdoor education activities and field trips that cover a mealtime period, and catering for special occasions and community events. Provision of halal, kosher or vegetarian options may be needed. Availability of vegetarian options is recommended.

Fasting

Schools should accommodate students and staff with respect to fasting observances. Appropriate space other than the cafeteria or lunchroom should be designated during lunch period for fasting students. Field trip plans should also consider the needs of fasting students. Students might need exemptions or alteration of activities in some classes, e.g., physical education.

Religious/Faith-based Attire

Student or staff wearing of certain hairstyles and attire, such as, but not limited to: yarmulkes, turbans, hijab (headscarves), niqabs, crucifixes, stars of David, should be

permitted respected. Staff attitudes are crucial to establishing a positive climate of understanding and respect for differences regarding faith-based attire.

Accommodation of Religion related Dress Requirements for Physical Education

When a student requests an accommodation for dress code for participation in physical education, the school and family are encouraged to find a mutually agreeable accommodation within the context of Ministry, Board, and school dress code expectations. Health and safety must be considered in the accommodation of dress. For example, a head scarf can be tucked into clothing, track pants may be worn instead of shorts in some situations but not where bare knees are required. The curriculum requirements should be explained to the family, so the family has sufficient information to understand the physical education curriculum and to select available curriculum alternatives.

Participation in Daily Activities, Curriculum and Program

When an accommodation is requested related to the content of curriculum and/or program, it is important to have an open discussion between the parents/guardians and the school. The accommodation applies to the individual who requests it, not the whole class or classroom practices in general.

Leave of Absence for Faith-based (Creed) Days of Significance and Celebrations

All staff and students who observe faith-based (creed) days of significance in accordance with Sec. 21 (2) (g) of the Education Act may be excused from attendance.

4. General Procedures for Creed Accommodation Requests

Staff

The person requesting accommodation for observance of creed/religious beliefs should advise their teacher/principal/supervisor at the beginning of the school year, to the extent possible. If September notice is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible.

The absence of employees due to creed/religious observances will be accommodated as determined by this guideline, ~~policy~~ SGDSB's Workplace Harassment and Human Rights Policy, 717, and the appropriate collective agreement.

Students

Parents/guardians/adult students must present verbal or written notice for the student to school administration, specifying their accommodation needs relating to faith/creed observances, including holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of each school year) to ensure that scheduling of major evaluations, such as tests, assignments or examinations, takes the faith/creed observances into consideration.

Student handbooks and parent newsletters should include information about the procedure to follow to request an accommodation for faith/creed observances and/or faith or creed-based days of significance. Such procedures should be easy for staff, students, and parents to understand.

Unresolved Requests

When a determination is made that an accommodation would create undue hardship, the person requesting the accommodation will be given written notice, including the reasons for the decision and the objective evidence relied upon.

In the event an accommodation request is not granted, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Superintendent.

5. Recognizing Holy Days of Faith (Creed) in Schools

The intent of recognizing faith-based holy days or events is to educate, not indoctrinate. Days of religious significance as identified in SGDSB's Diversity calendar should be recognized to the degree it is appropriate in each school setting. Recognition means the inclusion of events in a school curricular and co-curricular program, and may occur through festivals, concerts and other activities.

The law allows for teaching about different faiths and creeds; however, Board practices must be implemented in a manner which is equitable to all groups.

6. Distribution of Faith Literature and Resources

Superior-Greenstone District School Board facilities will not distribute faith-based literature to students. The only exception to this statement is if the materials support curriculum expectations in a program of study. School libraries may include religious/faith texts in their collections as sources of information for students and staff.